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Appliances

Ordinary and necessary expenses for small appliances (microwaves, coffee makers, etc.) for use in the Member's congressional offices are reimbursable.

Equipment that exceeds \$500 in value must be added to the Member's office inventory.

Contact Office Systems Management at x53994 to revise an office inventory.

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An Artistic Discovery, The Congressional Art Competition

Ordinary and necessary expenses, within a category of authorized official and representational expenses, related to the congressional art competition, An Artistic Discovery, are reimbursable.

A Member may not mail An Artistic Discovery entry under the Frank. Shipping An Artistic Discovery entry by means other than the Frank is reimbursable.

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Certificates

Certificates of recognition to a person who has achieved some public distinction for distribution in connection with official and representational duties are reimbursable.

Certificates must comply with the Franking Regulations.

Contact the Franking Commission at x59337.

See Gifts and Donations (17).

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Clipping Services

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to clipping services (newspapers, periodicals, magazines, etc.) are reimbursable.

See Publications (20).

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Decorating Expenses

Decorations of nominal value (such as frames, bookends, flags, seals, etc.) for Congressional offices are reimbursable.

Contact the Committee on House Administration at x58281 for a list of government agencies that provide wall decorations free of charge.

See Framing (17) and Furniture (17).

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Deposits

Security and other deposits are not reimbursable and must be paid from the Member's personal funds. Each Member should notify vendors that any return of deposits should be made to the Member.

See Advance Payments (42), District Office Leases (23), Booths (27), and Officially Leased Vehicles (40).

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Drug Testing

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to drug testing, in accordance with the Member's written drug-testing policy, are reimbursable.

Offices should consult with the Office of House Employment Counsel at x57075 when establishing drug-testing policies.

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Dues

Dues, membership fees, assessments, and annual fees are not reimbursable. (5 U.S.C. § 5946).

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Educational Expenses

Ordinary and necessary expenses for Members or employees to attend conferences, seminars, briefings, professional training, and informational programs related to the official and representational duties to the district from which elected are reimbursable.

1. Members or employees may not be reimbursed for expenses to attend educational programs in order to obtain a primary, secondary, graduate, post-graduate, or professional degree.
2. Expenses associated with acquiring or maintaining professional certification or licensing are not reimbursable.

See Advance Payments (42) and Contractors (7).

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Employment-Related Expenses

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to filling employment vacancies are reimbursable.

The following expenses are not reimbursable:

1. Transportation to and from employment interviews.
2. Relocation expenses upon acceptance or termination of employment.
3. Relocation expenses incidental to a change in duty station.

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Flags

U.S. flags for purchase by individuals may be obtained by a Member from the Office

Supply Service (OSS) (x53321). Initially, the costs of the flags will be charged to the MRA. Once payment for a flag is received by the Member office, the office may submit the check to OSS.

OSS will credit
the Member's account.

If a request is made to have a U.S.
flag flown over the Capitol, an additional flag flying fee must be paid by the individual purchasing the flag. See Gifts and Donations (17).

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Food and Beverage Expenses

Members and employees may be reimbursed for food and beverage expenses incidental to an official and representational meeting that includes a person(s) who is not a Member or employee of the House.

Members and employees may not be reimbursed for food and beverage expenses related to social activities or social events (e.g. hospitality, receptions, entertainment, holiday or personal celebrations, and swearing-in or inauguration day celebrations).

Members and employees may not be reimbursed for the cost of alcoholic beverages.

See Town Hall Meetings (21).

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Framing

Framing services for items to be displayed in the Member's Congressional offices are reimbursable. In Washington, D.C., when a Member uses the in-House framing service provided by the CAO, charges will be automatically charged to the MRA.

See Decorating Expenses (16) and Gifts and Donations (17).

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Furniture

Furniture (furniture, carpet, drapes, etc. (including repairs) for Washington, D.C., congressional offices are supplied and maintained by the CAO through the Offices Services (x53994) without charge to the MRA. Furniture for the Washington, D.C., congressional offices is not reimbursable.

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Gifts and Donations

Only the following gifts and donations are reimbursable:

1. Items purchased for official presentation when on official travel for the House of Representatives outside the United States, its territories and possessions. To purchase items from the House Gift Shop, select the item(s) and notify the sales clerk that it is for official presentation business in the course of overseas travel. Receipts for such items should be vouchered for payment to the Office Supply Service, and the voucher description should note that it is for official presentation in the course of overseas travel.
2. U.S. flags flown over the Capitol for official presentation as a gift, including the flag flying fee, are reimbursable. Such flags must be for the personal use of or display by the recipient. Donations of flags purchased through the MRA for fundraising activities are prohibited.
3. Ordinary and necessary costs associated with the purchase of presentation folders or frames, which are of nominal value.
4. Informational and educational federal government publications of nominal value.
5. U.S. Capitol Historical society publications of nominal value (including calendars).

No other gifts or donations are reimbursable.

See Flags (16), Certificates (15), Framing (17), Congressional Record (20), Printing and Production (33), Photography Expenses (20), and Postal Expenses (33).

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Greetings

Expenses related to the purchase or distribution of greetings, including holiday celebrations, condolences, and congratulations for personal distinctions (wedding anniversaries, birthdays, etc.), are not reimbursable.

See the Franking Regulations, available from the Franking Commission at x59337 for information on recognition of public distinction.

See Certificates (15).

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Insurance

A Member may be asked to provide a certificate of insurance for the purpose of entering into a lease for a district office or for securing space in which to conduct a town-hall meeting or other official and representational event. The House does not carry a private insurance policy and generally does not permit Members to use the MRA to pay for a private insurance policy.

Under the provisions of the Federal Tort Claims Act (28 U.S.C. § 2671-2680), the United States acts as a self-insurer and recognizes liability for the negligent and wrongful acts or omissions of its employees acting within the scope of their official and representational duties. The United States is liable to the same extent an individual would be in like circumstances.

Although the Federal Tort Claims Act is not the equivalent of private liability insurance, it does provide an aggrieved party with administrative recourse, and if that proves unsatisfactory, legal recourse for damage or injury sustained. Thus, to the extent negligent acts of Members or congressional staff, while conducting official and representational duties, result in either property damage or bodily injury, such damage or injury should be compensable under the Act in a manner that affords protection similar to private liability insurance.

However, if the provisions of the Federal Tort Claims Act are not considered adequate, the ordinary and necessary expenses for liability insurance to cover these risks are reimbursable. When a compensable event occurs, the deductible portion of a policy may be paid from the MRA.

The expenses of fire and theft insurance are not reimbursable.

Contact the Office of the General Counsel at x59700 for guidance regarding the Federal Tort Claims Act.

See Officially Leased Vehicles (40).

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Interpreting and Translating Services

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to interpreting and translating services, including accommodations under the ADA, are reimbursable.

For events held in House Office Buildings contact the Congressional Special Services Office at x44048 and the Office of ADA Services at x53005 for assistance.

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Late Fees

Ordinary and necessary fees related to late payments incurred beyond the control of the Member are reimbursable.

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Mass Transit Benefit

Members and staff in Washington, DC or the district are eligible for a mass transit benefit. For information regarding this benefit, please contact CAO First Call at x58000.

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Messenger Services

Ordinary and necessary expenses for messenger services related to the Member's official and representational duties are reimbursable.

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Parking

1. Each Member is provided one garage parking permit for the Member's use; at the prerogative of the Member, this permit may be assigned to staff. In addition, each Member is provided five indoor garage parking permits and two outdoor lot parking permits.

a. Garage parking spaces may be reserved. If a space is reserved by an authorized permit holder, the permit holder incurs additional taxable income as a working condition fringe benefit. Under the tax code and IRS regulations, Members and their staff have imputed taxable income to the extent that the fair market value of Government-provided parking exceeds \$175.00/month (the value of the parking space is subject to future adjustments).

b. When a garage space is reserved, the Director of House Garages and Parking Security will notify Human Resources. Government-provided parking includes the combined value of parking spaces in Washington, D.C., and the district. Contact Human Resources at x52450 to make appropriate tax withholdings.

2. At the beginning of each Congress, the Office of House Garages and Parking Security will send parking permit application forms to each Member's office. The Member should designate on the forms, to whom garage or outside parking space permits are to be issued, and with regard to a garage space, whether the space is to be assigned on a reserved or unreserved basis. The application forms must include the individual's name, House of Representatives ID number (where applicable), the model, color, and year of the individual's automobile, and the automobile license number and state.

3. All offices must retrieve parking permits from departing staff. Additionally, offices must notify House Garages and Parking Security of any transfers or changes in permit assignments. Notifications should be in writing on official letterhead and include the Member's signature.

4. The House of Representatives will not be liable for any damage caused to or theft of any motor vehicle or the contents thereof while parked on a House parking lot when that lot is not attended.

Contact the Committee on House Administration at x58281.

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Photography Expenses

Ordinary and necessary photography expenses related to a Member's official and representational duties, including but not limited to, the Member's official photo, official photographs for distribution to constituents, and photograph presentation folders and frames of nominal value, are reimbursable.

In Washington, D.C., contact the House Photography Studio at x52840 for services, charges, and availability.

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Publications

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to purchasing or subscribing to publications, including but not limited to research materials, reference books, informational brochures, electronic services, or periodicals are reimbursable.

All invoices for subscriptions received by the Office of Finance through the close of business January 2, will be debited from the current MRA year. Subscriptions beginning on January 1 or 2, may be debited from either allowance year, as directed by the Member.

Subscriptions may exceed the Member's term. Subscriptions that exceed a Member's term in office will be assigned to the Member's successor.

See Advance Payments (42).

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Congressional Record

Costs related to providing Congressional Record subscriptions to constituents,

private entities, or public entities are not reimbursable.

Offices are authorized to purchase additional copies of the Congressional Record, as necessary for office use.

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Staff Meetings

Members and staff may attend staff meetings at a Member-authorized location in the Member's State or in the Capitol Hill complex (U.S. Capitol, House and Senate Office Buildings, Library of Congress, U.S. Botanic Gardens, and the U.S. Supreme Court) for official and representational purposes, and may seek reimbursement for expenses relating to attendance at such meetings, provided that such expenses are otherwise consistent with all other Handbook regulations.

The MRA may not be used for social events or activities.

See Travel (37), Educational Expenses (16), Food and Beverage Expenses (17), and Contractors (7).

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Supplies

Office supplies to support the conduct of the Member's official and representational duties are reimbursable.

The Office Supply Store (OSS) is located in Room B-217 Longworth at x53321. OSS issues each Member an Account Card for official purchases, which may only be used by the Member and/or staff. The cost of all items purchased with the Account Card is charged to the MRA.

Supplies for a Member's district office may be procured in the district through supply stores or through regional General Services Administration (GSA) supply centers.

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House Gift Shop

OSS also operates a gift shop in B-217A Longworth which sells souvenirs and mementos to Members, staff, and the public. Gift Shop purchases may be made by cash, check or credit card. A Member Account Card may not be used to purchase items at the Gift Shop.

Contact OSS for inquiries on special orders, deliveries, and OSS statements at x53321.

See Gifts and Donations (17).

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Telecommunications

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to the official use, including periodic or flat service fees, of telecommunications lines (voice and data) in the residence of a Member or employee are reimbursable. The cost of installation of such lines is not reimbursable.

See Advance Payments (42).

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Town Hall Meetings

A town hall meeting is an official meeting a Member holds within the Member's district with their constituents to facilitate the exchange of information regarding the Member's official and representational duties.

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to town hall meetings are reimbursable.

Ordinary and necessary expenses include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Advertisements
2. Rental of rooms, chairs, audio systems
3. Audio/Video Expenses
4. Interpreting Services
5. ADA Accommodations
6. Reporting and transcription services
7. Electronic Transmission (Not television)
8. Custodial Services
9. Signs/banners/leaflets/flyers that comply with the Franking Regulations
10. Security

Members may invite any Member of Congress to participate in their official town hall meeting. Travel expenses for a guest Member or Senator are reimbursable from the MRA of the host Member.

Town Hall Meeting notices should include a contact person to arrange for

accommodations for persons with disabilities.

Members and employees may not accept, from any private source, in kind support having monetary value for a town hall meeting. Contact the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct at x57103.

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Joint Town Hall Meetings

Members may be reimbursed for ordinary and necessary expenses associated with holding joint town hall meetings with Members of the House of Representatives, representing adjacent districts or United States Senators representing the same state, as specified below.

1. Joint town hall meetings can be held in one of the Members' districts, in order to facilitate the exchange of information regarding the Member's official and representational duties.
2. Expenses (excluding mail) may be divided to reflect an accurate representation of each Member's expenses, and may be directly vouchered through the Office of Finance with supporting documentation (invitation, agenda, etc.) for the meeting.
3. 39 U.S.C. § 2910 prohibits Members from sending any mass mailings outside of the district from which elected. Therefore, Franked mail expenses that relate to advertising Joint Town Hall meetings must be separately accounted for and charged to the MRA of the Member into whose District the Franked mail was delivered.

See Advertisements (25), Food and Beverage Expenses (17), and Interpreting and Translation Services (18).

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Radio Town Hall Meetings

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to the purchase of radio broadcasting time to hold an "electronic" town hall meeting are reimbursable.

The radio station broadcasting the town hall meeting must serve the Member's district.

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District Office

Cable

Costs of cable television service in support of official and representational duties in the district office(s) are reimbursable.

See Deposits (16).

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Custodial Services

Ordinary and necessary expenses for custodial services for district office(s) are reimbursable.

See Contractors (7).

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Furniture

Furniture requests for district congressional offices are processed through Office Systems Management and charged to the MRA.

Offices should submit written requests to Office Systems Management, B-215 Longworth House Office Building prior to the purchase of any Furniture for district offices.

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Leases

Rental expenses related to district offices, except for security deposits, are reimbursable. There is no limit on the number and size of district offices a Member may establish. No lease may extend beyond the Member's elected term. Members must notify the Office of Finance at x57474 in writing when a lease is terminated.

District offices may be located in:

1. Federal buildings commercial buildings
2. State, county, or municipal buildings
3. Mobile district offices

District office space must be located within a Member's district unless there is no suitable office space in a federal building in the Member's district. In

that event, a district office may be located in a federal building serving the Member's district.

Members may not accept free office space from private entities. Private office space must be leased at a fair market value as the result of a bona fide, arms-length, marketplace transaction.

All leases must include a House lease attachment. Leases and lease attachments must be submitted to the Office of Administrative Counsel (x56969) for review and processing. The Committee recommends that Members submit such leases for review prior to being signed by the Member and lessor, because the Member is personally liable for payments under any lease not in compliance with House Rules and Committee regulations.

The House will authorize disbursement of funds under the terms of the lease agreement only if the lease agreement complies with the Rules of the House and the Regulations of the Committee on House Administration. The House will not authorize disbursement of funds to make payments under the terms of the lease agreement until the Administrative Counsel has reviewed the lease agreement and has signed the Attachment. Similarly, the Administrative Counsel must review any proposed substantive amendment and sign the Attachment for the amendment before the House will authorize any payment pursuant to such an amendment. Any amendment to a lease agreement must be in writing.

The Committee on Standards of Official Conduct has ruled that Members may accept free office space, located in their district, when such space is provided by a federal, state, or local government agency.

Contact the Administrative Counsel at x56969 for lease standards.

See Deposits (16).

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Mobile District Offices

Mobile district offices must remain in the Member's district unless they are being stored, receiving maintenance and repair, or traveling between points in the district.

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Parking

Parking should be negotiated as part of the district office lease. However, if parking is unavailable or insufficient through the district office lease, Members may negotiate a separate parking space lease and submit it to the Office of Administrative Counsel for review and processing.

Contact the Administrative Counsel at x56969 for lease standards.

Under the tax code and IRS regulations, Members and their staff have imputed taxable income to the extent that the fair market value of Government-provided

parking exceeds \$190.00/month (the value of the parking space is subject to future adjustments). Government-provided parking includes the combined value of parking spaces in Washington, D.C., and the district.

Contact Human Resources at x52450 to make appropriate tax withholdings.

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Repairs

Ordinary and necessary expenses for minor office repairs that are the responsibility of the tenant, or cosmetic changes that are requested by the tenant and are not covered in the lease are reimbursable. The expenses of capital improvements to district offices are not reimbursable.

Contact the Office of Administrative Counsel at x56969 to determine if a repair qualifies as a minor office repair or cosmetic change.

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Security

Ordinary and necessary expenses associated with security measures in a Member's district office are reimbursable.

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Sharing Offices

A Member may share office space with Members of the United States Senate from the Member's state or with state and local officials, but all expenses (including rent, utilities, etc.) and space must be kept and billed separately. Members may not share district office space with other Members of the House of Representatives.

Contact Administrative Counsel at x56969 to submit such leases for review, and the Office of Finance at x57474 to establish billing arrangements.

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Signs

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to purchasing sign(s) to identify the location of a district office are reimbursable. Such signs may not include a picture or likeness of the Member and must state that the premises is a district congressional office. If a sign includes more than a Member's name and district, the content must comply with the Franking Regulations.

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Storage

Storage should be negotiated as part of the district office lease. However, if storage space is unavailable or insufficient within the district office space, Members may negotiate a separate storage space lease and submit it to the Office of Administrative Counsel for review and processing.

Contact the Administrative Counsel at x56969 for lease standards.

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Utilities

Utilities are reimbursable. They may be integral to the lease and included in the monthly rent, or may be vouchered separately, or processed through automatic payment.

Contact the Office of Finance at x57474 for information regarding automatic payment of utilities.

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Communications

Advertisements

Ordinary and necessary expenses related only to the following types of advertisements are reimbursable:

1. Notice of town hall meetings.
2. Personal appearance of the Member at an official event, which the Member sponsors and hosts in support of the conduct of the Member's official and representational duties to the district from which elected.
3. Notice relating to the nomination process to the U.S. Military Academies.

4. Notice relating to the congressional art competition, "An Artistic Discovery."

5. Notice of employee and internship openings.

Advertisements may not include a picture or likeness of the Member.

Advertisement must receive an Advisory Opinion from the Franking Commission.

Advertisements for town hall meeting may only contain the Member's name, general title of subject matter addressed, germane graphics, guests (if applicable), time, date, location of the meeting (if applicable), and contact.

Contact the Franking Commission at x59337.

There are restrictions on mass communications within 90 days of an election.

See Unsolicited Mass Communication Restrictions (35), Audio and Video Expenses (27), Town Hall Meetings (21), Employment-Related Expenses (16), Newspaper Inserts (33), Television (26), and Radio (26).

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Disclosure

Members must disclose, within the text of a television, radio and Internet advertisement, the source of payment for the official advertisements. Members may use any of the following:

1. "Paid for with official funds from the office of [Member's name]."
2. "Paid for by the funds authorized by the House of Representatives for the [district number] District of [name of state]."
3. "Paid for by official funds authorized by the House of Representatives."

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Internet

Members are authorized to purchase only advertisements within the five authorized categories on web pages that serve the Member's district. The advertisements may contain only text, and may link to a secondary page that contains only text relating to a category of authorized advertisement, and the secondary page may contain a link to the Member's home page.

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Radio

Ordinary and necessary expenses only for a radio advertisement within the five authorized categories are reimbursable.

The radio station broadcasting the advertisement or meeting must serve the Member's district.

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Television

Ordinary and necessary expenses only for a television advertisement within the five authorized categories are reimbursable.

A television advertisement may only contain text and voiceover. The television station broadcasting the advertisement must serve the Member's district.

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Audio and Video Expenses

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to audio and video recording and materials, including but not limited to the following, are reimbursable:

1. Production of public service announcements for distribution to the stations serving the Member's district.
2. Filming related to the appearance of a Member or the Member's employee at an official event.
3. Videotapes and transcripts of commercial broadcasts related to the Member or the Member's district for in-office use.
4. Videotapes that are produced by the Member or videotapes that are provided to a Member and authorized by the providing entity to be reproduced for official distribution.
5. Video teleconferencing services incurred in support of the Member's official and representational duties.

Except for town hall meeting announcements, the costs related to purchasing television broadcast time are not reimbursable.

In Washington, D.C., the House Recording Studio is available for audio and video services. Contact the House Recording Studio at x53941 for information on services, charges, and availability.

There are certain election-related restrictions on mass communications.

See Unsolicited Mass Communication Restrictions (35).

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Booths

Ordinary and necessary expenses associated with renting or outfitting a booth to provide public information directly related to the Member's official and representational duties are reimbursable.

See Advance Payments (42).

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MEMBER'S HANDBOOK

MEMBERS' REPRESENTATIONAL ALLOWANCE

STAFF

OFFICIAL & REPRESENTATIONAL EXPENSES CONTINUED